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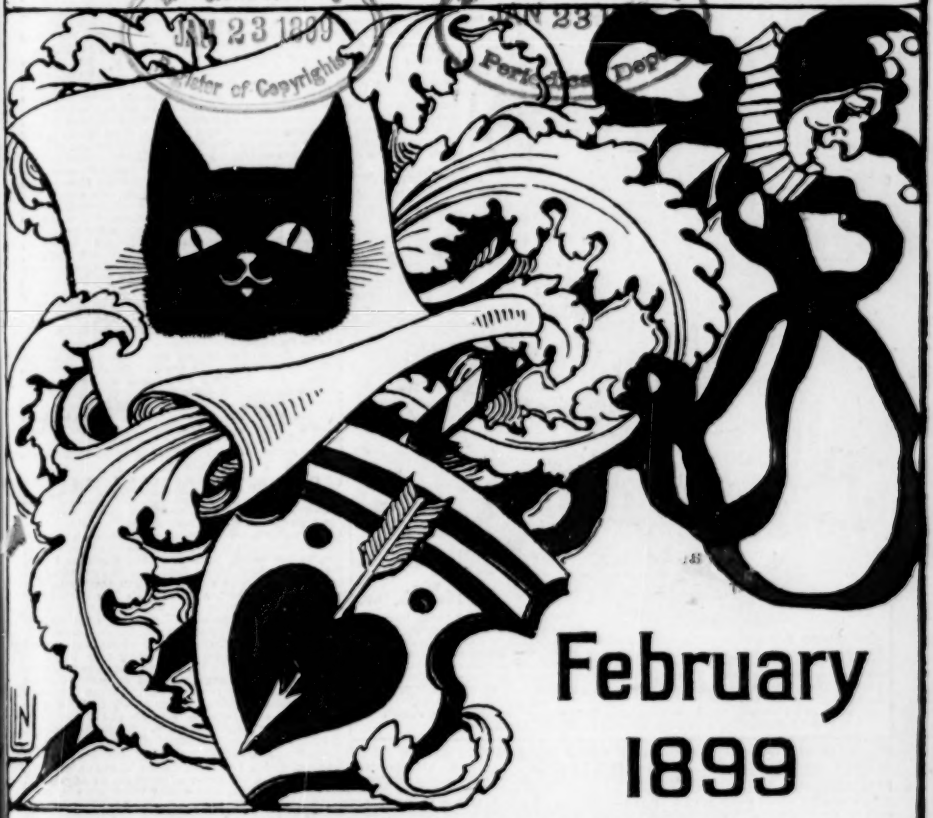

February 1899

On The Edge of Things. Geik Turner.
$100 Prize Story.

NEGATIVE NUMBER TWELVE.
Ernest Peabody.

MANUEL, OF THE GUARDIA CIVIL.
Charles Bryant Howard.

THE LYNCHPIN SENSATION.
Joanna E. Wood.

THE LADY AND THE KWANG-CHIU.
Frank L. Pollock.

5 CENTS

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The Black Cat

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THE BLACK CAT is devoted exclusively to original, unusual, fascinating stories — every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *Stories that are Stories*, and it pays not according to length, but according to strength. To receive attention, manuscripts must be sent unrolled, fully prepaid, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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On the Edge of Things.*

BY GEIK TURNER.

AS you reel down our great Atlantic shore on the slow coast steamers from Newfoundland to Florida, nothing of all you see so stimulates your imagination, or stamps itself upon your memory, as the lights along the land. For two thousand miles they stand in an unbroken line, marking the bounds of a continent, and every twenty-four hours, when the revolving world trundles the dim coast line around again into the dark, they all come forth — red lights and white lights — as certainly as the fixed stars, and stare and blink solemnly over the formless sea. One white stare means one shoal, and one red stare, perhaps a reef, and one and two and three winks, still other shoals and reefs, according to the kind of stare or the manner of the winking. By these signalings and the story of his lead line, translated by his dirty coast chart, the most blundering captain of a coal schooner can tell, in the blackest midnight he ever cut across, the color of the bottom underneath his ship.

*This story was awarded a $100 prize in THE BLACK CAT $4,000 prize story competition, ending March 31, 1898.

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With the advent of the morning these wonderful demonstrations fade out of existence, and in the broad glare of the day you can seldom see their sources. Yet occasionally, upon the distant sky line, you may distinguish a black speck, which indicates a lighthouse, and still more rarely you may see, floating like some great, strange orange sea-fowl on the vacant face of the waters, a lightship itself far out of sight of land, moored to the outer edge of some persistent shoal — a universe by itself, set out and established by the fiat of the government and populated by six lonely men.

Now, all this marvelous system was not created without a struggle. It has cost the lives of many hundred men and many thousands of dollars, offered up to an angry sea — a vicarious sacrifice for the thousands of souls and millions of dollars that were saved. And whenever you see a lightship or a lighthouse standing out waist deep in the sea upon some hidden shoal, you may be sure it forms the only monument to many a good stout martyr who has gone down, fighting and swearing, manfully into the sea.

Thirty and forty years ago they were performing what might be called experiments in higher biology with the service. They put fewer men in the stations — often only one in a lighthouse, and two upon a lightship. Then they observed them. They found, after long experience, that in some places men lost their lives and in some their minds, and gradually they strengthened those places. You can reason confidently from statistics gathered over a long series of years. But it is rather hard on those who furnish the statistics.

This is a modest tale of one of the experiments.

When Mat Osgood first went out to take charge of the ship on Buttermilk shoals, in the vacancy left by The Other Man, he was discouraged. It was a melancholy, mouse-colored day on the water, and the ship did not present a particularly homelike appearance. The assistant of The Other Man leaned over the rail of the ship like an orphaned kitten hanging over the edge of a basket. Inside everything was in distraction; the cabins were filthy and most of the provisions were gone. The Other Man had amused himself in his last hours by throwing them out.

There was also no stove. When The Other Man had decided to go, he made up his mind to take that with him. He had tied it to a rope around his neck, and they had gone off together. As far as was known, they were still together somewhere underneath the bottom of the ship.

The Assistant was a tall, dark man, with restless eyes and cold hands. He was reticent himself, but he asked questions continually. He seemed to want to hear Osgood talk. He stayed around close to him all day, while they were cleaning up and arranging the new provisions and putting up the new stove, and when he was sent off he came back again as soon as possible. When they ate supper together, Osgood felt him pressing his foot furtively under the table. He had something to say about himself at the meal.

"It's mighty discouragin' bein' alone here; sittin' around all day and thinkin', and walkin' up and down and up and down the deck at night. You see things sometimes you wouldn't suppose you would."

He stopped without saying what he saw.

It was plain to see that the death of Osgood's predecessor had unnerved him. "Another thing that kept wearin' on me," he said, "was The Other Man." (He always called him that, and jerked his thumb downward in explanation.) "You couldn't help thinkin' about him down underneath there hitched to that stove, floatin' and wavin' around like a bunch of seaweed. Nice feller he was, too; but I wished to God I'd never seen him."

Mat Osgood knew a few songs, and after supper he sang one or two at The Assistant's earnest request. He got a continuous encore. The Assistant said he wasn't much on music, but sometimes a man got kind of hungry for a human voice. When Osgood finished he sighed like a man getting up from a good meal.

Osgood knew some tricks with cards, with which he amused his companion after this. They also played cards together considerably. John Knox would have played cards if he had been shut up in a lightship a week. But The Assistant wanted mostly to hear the singing. Osgood sung for him the first night, and the second night, and the third night. The fourth night he was feeling used up and ugly, and he refused.

"I've made a fool of myself for you long enough," he said crossly.

The Assistant looked at him for a minute and then began to talk to himself and went up on the deck, and tramped around for a couple of hours singing. He only knew one tune, apparently, "The Girl I Left Behind Me." At least he didn't sing anything else, and every time he brought down his right foot on the deck, he stamped it. After a time it grew monotonous.

Next morning he had recovered from his little temper and was more communicative than before.

"You know," he said at breakfast, pointing downward, "he's comin' up again pretty soon."

When Osgood said he didn't know whether he would or not, The Assistant got excited.

"I tell you he is," he said. "It's time; you see now."

He wanted Osgood to sing again that night, but he refused again. They played cards awhile instead. The next night they went over the same thing again. Only The Assistant was ugly. Osgood beat him continually at cards, which made him worse. Finally, The Assistant jumped up. "I saw you," he said; "you're cheatin' me." Then he gathered together what cards he could and tore them up. He ended by running up on deck and throwing the fragments overboard. Then he marched around the deck singing again. Osgood went up and forced him to stop his foolishness and go to bed. Osgood was boiling by this time. The loss of the only pack of cards on a lightship assumes the proportions of a catastrophe.

In the morning The Assistant was still ugly. He sat around for a time singing and beating on a chair, and then he marched about.

Finally Osgood made him stop. "Oh, shut up," he said, "and give somebody a chance to think."

The Assistant protested. "The Other Man was decent," he said. "He wouldn't take away a feller's rights like this."

Osgood told what he didn't care for The Other Man.

"I'll tell you one thing," The Assistant shouted, "and you can believe it or not. He's comin' up pretty soon. I heard him no longer ago than last night knockin' along the bottom of the ship."

"What are you talking about?" asked Osgood gruffly.

"Oh, that's all right," said The Assistant, with the air of a man who has inside information. Then he went off, conversing with himself.

Osgood sat down that afternoon and reasoned about his assistant and himself and their relations to each other. That man had just been through things that no man should go through alone; he was worn out and ugly and needed to have somebody turn in and help him get a grip on himself again. He was going the wrong direction now. Osgood knew that; he had seen such things before. And there were possibilities in that line not pleasant for either party. The possibility of a necessity of putting into action, for instance, that great principle of the survival of the fittest. He decided to humor The Assistant and talk things over with him to find out just where he was.

He asked him at supper if he really believed in ghosts.

The Assistant had very clearly defined views on the matter. Why shouldn't he believe in ghosts? "I don't know about the land," said he; "I've spent most of my years at sea. And when you do that, there ain't no doubt of it. Things happen at sea, and numbers mean somethin', and there are signals for good and bad luck. Any sailor 'll tell you that. Now, what makes them signals and them laws? Somethin' does, that's certain; and it's just one thing. It's ghosts, I tell you.

"It's my opinion they don't like to stay around shore where there's houses and men and all that. They come right out here, where they won't be disturbed and can rattle around as free as they please. And when a man knows about them he can't help tellin' when they are around. When it's foggy, they hang off a little as if they was watchin' you, and in rough weather they just go sizzlin' by and howlin'.

"There! what's that?" said The Assistant in a loud voice, jumping up and turning over his chair.

"That's one of them, you see," said he.

"Oh, damn it, sit down," said Osgood, jumping up himself; "that's the wind."

"That's easy to say," said The Assistant, "but what'd you jump for? I tell you, you know and I know there is such things as ghosts. Then, furthermore, most every vessel you ever see has

some particular one that belongs to it — even a lightship. Take us and The Other Man down there. You don't suppose when a man is planted and stands there wavin' and wabblin' and rollin' about the bottom underneath you, but what he keeps an eye on you. Yes, sir; and comes up sometimes to see what's goin' on; and, sometimes, he comes to stay. And if you see him, sometimes it blasts the eyes out of your head; and then again he only wants you to do what he tells you; and then you're done for, as far as this earth is concerned."

The Assistant had a ghastly, convincing way of telling a story; there were lights in his eyes, and he leaned over and his voice was husky. The time and place also were stimulating to the imagination. There they sat under the yellow cabin lamp, staring at each other across the table, with the wind yelling above, and the water hissing underneath the boat — two lonely men at the edge of things, connected to reality only by two slender chains, with blackness and chaos and confusion trembling over them to devour them.

"Well, anyway," said Osgood, swallowing, "that ain't anything you want to think about. It ain't good nor wholesome for you. Don't do it."

"Supposin' you can't help it?" said The Assistant.

"Damn it, you must help it," said Osgood. Then he offered to sing a little, and suggested that they get together a pack of cards with what The Assistant had left and what The Other Man had scattered around the cabin before he got through. They managed to patch up something, and then they played. Osgood lost. The Assistant beat him; but this wouldn't do, either. The Assistant finally got up mad again. He didn't want to be babied, he said.

He went up on deck and marched again.

The next day Osgood tried to pacify him, but he balked every attempt. Osgood asked him several times in the evening to play cards with him. He refused continually.

"Oh, go to the devil," said Osgood finally.

The Assistant was ugly himself, but he seemed to have the idea that Osgood was the offender. "What have you got against me, anyway?" said he at breakfast.

"Nothing whatever," replied Osgood.

"You don't treat me like The Other Man did," complained The Assistant.

"Well, probably you'll have him back again before long," retorted Osgood sneeringly.

"Probably I will," said The Assistant surlily.

At noon Osgood couldn't find the big butcher knife.

"What'd you do with that knife?" he asked.

"None of your business."

"I'll make it my business," exclaimed Osgood, starting for The Assistant. He was a good deal the larger man, and The Assistant wilted.

"Well, here it is, if you really want it," he said, taking it out of the pocket of his coat and putting it on the table. "It's just as handy there as anywhere, as far as I care."

Osgood took charge of the knife himself.

He woke up that night suddenly and found The Assistant staring at him.

"Well," said he, "what is it?"

The Assistant started back.

"Didn't you hear that knocking? He's comin' up pretty quick!"

"Oh, go to sleep, you cursed fool," cried Osgood.

The next night he was waked up in the same way. It was disagreeable business being waked up from a sound sleep and looking into a man's eyes. The Assistant evidently sat and stared at him.

"If you do that again," said Osgood, "I'll break every bone in your body."

The next evening Osgood sat alone in the cabin with The Assistant up above. All of a sudden he heard him dancing up and down on the deck and yelling.

"I told you he'd come! I told you he'd come!" he was shouting.

Osgood ran up on deck. It was a foggy night and very still, and the yellow glare of the lights shone only in a narrow circle in the water.

"Look at him! look at him!" screamed The Assistant, pointing down into the water.

On the edge of the circle of light, drifting slowly outside, was something — not very plain, but still clear enough to show its general outline — something that looked like a man, only it had no head.

"Where's his head?" said Osgood, wetting his lips.

"He didn't bring it with him; it's down there with the stove," yelled The Assistant.

They stood and watched it awhile, and it seesawed back and forth on the swell until it disappeared in the mist.

"Well, he's gone now, anyway," Osgood whispered hoarsely.

"Yes, for now he's gone," answered The Assistant; "but this is only the first time he's come."

Osgood pacified The Assistant the best way he could and then went below and bunked in. He could hear The Assistant pacing the deck, and every time he closed his eyes he saw The Other Man drifting out into the mist. So he wallowed about till nearly morning. Then he fell into a heavy sleep.

When he woke he thought he was paralyzed. He couldn't move a muscle of his body, but simply lay there staring at the top of the bunk. Finally he found he could move his head a little, and raised it up and looked down. He was tied hand and foot; wrapped round and round with rope like a bobbin.

He began to yell furiously. Finally The Assistant came down.

"Here! You let me loose," cried Osgood frantically.

There was a pause.

"If you don't, I'll break your neck when I get out of here."

"You ain't goin' to get out," remarked The Assistant laconically.

Osgood began to swear a stream.

"Here, you shut up," said The Assistant; "you're disturbin' Him."

"What are you talkin' about?"

"I'm talkin' about him," said The Assistant — "The Other Man — that's what I'm talkin' about. You said he wouldn't come back again, you did. But he did — just as I said. He's up there now, and he's come to stay. 'Go down there,' he says, 'and tie that feller up. I've come back to take charge of this thing, just as I ought to.' So I did.

"But I tell you," continued The Assistant confidentially, "it's mighty peculiar; I can't get used to it. You see, he ain't got his head on. He just stands there and talks and waves his arms slowly around. Then the way he walks! He goes everywhere, he does, right up the side of the boat or on the masts, or right out into the air. I saw him first when he came up. He walked straight up the chains right into the boat — all drippin' with water and seaweed. It don't seem quite natural, does it?"

The Assistant's voice had sunk to a whisper, and his eyes shone like a cat's.

Suddenly he jumped up. "He's callin' me now," said he, and disappeared hurriedly on deck. It was as silent as the grave.

Osgood lay and thought it over. He reached no other conclusion than a strong appreciation of the fact that he was ten miles from shore, and thirty days from the visit of the government tender. He strained again at the ropes; then collapsed, and decided to resort to strategy. He yelled again for The Assistant.

"What you yellin' for?" asked that gentleman, when he appeared.

"Say," said Osgood, "tell him I'm ready to give up to him; and — hold on — ask him if he don't want another man to help him. Because I'd like to first rate, if he will give me a show."

The Assistant went up again and talked to himself on deck. Then he came back to the hatchway. "He says you stay where you are," he yelled down.

Osgood lay thinking over the chances. The weather was still, apparently, and The Assistant could run the thing all right now. If he would only feed him, things might run along till something happened. He was wildly happy when The Assistant brought down his dinner.

"We've been talkin' you over," said The Assistant frankly; "I kind of thought we would have to get rid of you, but he says we'd better keep you a while longer."

He proceeded to feed Osgood.

"You see, we're goin' to get out of here," he continued. "He's gettin' ready for a cruise. He's terribly worked up over it — walkin' back and forth, and flappin' his arms. He wants me to hurry and get away from here. So I've got to file off the

chains this afternoon. But you know and I know that it can't be done in one afternoon or one day, either. Then after that, we're headin' away from here."

"Where you going?" asked Osgood.

"I ain't askin' no questions. The Other Man will be at the helm, and me at the masthead. But I kind of suspect," said The Assistant confidentially, "that we're goin' to the devil."

Osgood argued strongly against the plan, but he didn't make any impression. "I ain't taking orders from you now," said The Assistant.

Then he hunted around and got the file, and went on deck.

About the middle of the afternoon he came down again.

"Want anything now?" he asked.

"No," said Osgood, "unless it is to get loose again."

"Well, I didn't know," said The Assistant. "He says to me, 'We want to treat him well while we keep him,' he said, and then he sent me down."

The Assistant started up again. "Oh, say," called Osgood, as he was leaving, "what's it like outside?"

"Quiet and foggy," said The Assistant.

That was fortunate, anyway.

A couple of hours later Osgood called to The Assistant, and finally got him.

"You're goin' to light up pretty soon, ain't you," said he.

"No, I ain't," said The Assistant. "He won't have it. 'That's what made me what I am — a poor ghost,' said he, 'that light beatin' down on me. Besides, we ghosts don't like light, anyway.'

"Then it came across me that light was always trying to me. 'Am I a ghost?' said I. 'You and I are both ghosts,' said he, in a solemn kind of way. 'You become one last night, when you saw me comin' up. That other feller below is different,' he said, with a kind of a sigh. 'I suppose we've got to get rid of him. He's too real for a ghost ship.'

"But say," said The Assistant, "don't holler so much. Ghosts don't like so much noise. 'The next time he yells, you go down and hit him with this club,'" said The Other Man.

"But, look here," called Osgood appealingly, "you'd better

light up to night; just to-night, you know, before you get started on your tour."

The Assistant was obdurate.

"Well, anyway," said Osgood in despair, "just turn me over a little, can't you? I'm half dead lying in this position."

He was changed a little.

"And say, you'll give me something at supper time, won't you?"

The Assistant assented and went up. Then time dragged on till supper. It was getting pretty dark when The Assistant came down again with something to eat.

"How far have you got with the chain?" asked Osgood.

"Only about half way through the first one." He went on to tell his plans. He wasn't going to file any more that night.

"Goin' to bed?" inquired Osgood.

"No," replied The Assistant; "ghosts don't go to bed. I've got new orders from Him. 'I want you,' says he, 'to soak this boat with oil, so if we get caught by any real ship before we get to our port, we'll all go up in smoke and brimstone.'"

"Oh, for God's sake!" cried Osgood, "you must have been mistaken. A ghost don't like smoke and fire. He didn't tell you that, did he?"

"Yes, he did," asserted The Assistant confidentially, "but I ain't to use a light, just the same, till it's necessary. It's goin' to be pretty hard to see pretty soon."

It was already dark in the cabin. But all that evening Osgood heard the maniac fumbling around in the cabins and pouring the oil on the deck, and occasionally he got a whiff of it.

At about 10 o'clock he heard The Assistant yell frantically. Then there was a dull, grinding noise, and the sounds of bells and cries, as if a small city had landed next to them. A steamer had come aground, and its nervous system was jangling from the shock.

The lookout saw a black hulk directly before them.

"For God's sake!" exclaimed the first mate, who was in charge, "what's that?"

"It's the Buttermilk light, black as the devil," cried the lookout. Then everybody began to swear.

This interested and stimulated The Assistant, who dropped his matches and danced about the deck, yelling and cursing and jabbering, forgetting everything else.

The captain finally sent a crew across, and they boarded the lightship in spite of the stout resistance of The Asssistant, who was overpowered and sat upon four deep by sailors.

By this time Osgood was yelling his wildest below.

"What the devil have we struck," said the second mate, "a floating lunatic asylum?"

"No, sir," answered The Assistant solemnly; "this is a ghost ship, and The Other Man and I are running it. You get out of here; you don't belong here; you're real." He was getting excited, and, the sailors having released him for a moment, he made a dive for his matches.

The sailors promptly suppressed him.

"Never mind," yelled The Assistant, "The Other Man will do it; he'll send you up in fire and brimstone; he won't be caught by you, he won't. He'll —"

The biggest sailor put his hand over his mouth and they carried him to the steamer.

Negative Number Twelve.*

BY ERNEST PEABODY.

ROBERT MARCH sat idly drumming with his penholder upon the fresh white pad of paper — borrowed from the stock of his jolly room-mate, John Barden. It was no use, he could not concentrate his mind upon the task before him.

"What an elusive, intangible thing is thought!" he mused. "Here are fifty spotless sheets, lacking but a sprinkling of conventional signs to become a glorious epic or a noble essay! Yes, or a large check, if one's name were worth it!"

Clearly, he was in no mood for writing, and pushing away the pad he lit a cigar. As he did so his glance fell upon his camera, an improved instrument, recently purchased, and he picked it up. But the other day he had read of a scientific enthusiast who predicted the photographing of thought. How convenient such a process would be when an author's mind felt as languid as his did then! He need only face the camera, press the button, and somebody could do the rest. Or he could do it himself. Yes, that would be decidedly better — and safer. Besides, he still enjoyed the fascination in watching the dead-white surface of the undeveloped plate dissolve into a wonderful tracery of detail, with its charming gradations of light and shade.

"And why not? Who should say it cannot be done?" thought March, still gazing intently, though vacantly, at the closed shutter of the camera. Turning it over, he found that but one exposure remained to be made on that roll of film. He resolved to sacrifice that, and, as he could not write, devote part of his evening to the development of his eleven pictures.

He arranged his trays and developer, turned out the gas, unrolled the film and cut it up. In doing this he mixed the pieces together, carelessly, he thought at the moment, but later he was convinced that it must have been under some powerful occult in-

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fluence. He had no idea of wasting time on blank films, and would throw away No. 12 as soon as partial development of the others revealed its identity.

Eight pictures developed with excellent results, and March put the last four into the tray, hoping for the same good luck with three of them. Great was his surprise and consternation to find an image beginning to appear on each of the four films. Where was the blank? Hastily he counted the other eight. They were all there. He turned to the four in the tray, and as the images became clearer was able to account for three of them. But the fourth — the mysterious No. 12? Plainer and clearer it became every minute — exquisite in contrast, perfect in detail! Plainer and clearer and fairer appeared upon that marvelous film the picture of a woman's face.

What did it mean? No. 12 had never been exposed. No. 12 should have remained a dead-white, unresponsive blank. And here, instead, was this astonishing result — a beautiful portrait!

All March had ever read of the power of thought, the possible, nay, even probable, presence of unknown psychic forces — all this flashed into his mind as he recalled his long though inattentive gaze at the closed shutter a short time before, and then a sense of the insufficiency of each new theory left him staring helplessly at the beautiful picture.

The face was half turned away, partially revealing a regular profile and rounded throat. The eyes were large and expressive. The hair, brushed simply back from the forehead, was dark, and of that naturally wavy growth that scorns the crimping iron. These details he studied later, but even in the negative he could see that she was indeed very beautiful — of a type that appeals vainly for adequate description.

March went through the other operations of fixing and washing in a sort of stupor. Here was certainly some mystery beyond his ken. Was it a photograph of thought? Impossible! That face had never been conceived in his imagination. Nothing so ideal had ever presented itself to his mind's eye. But yet, who knows how far that inner eye may see, or what may lie beyond this narrow pale of human consciousness? Was this in truth a photograph of thought?

For a long time he sat reasoning, questioning and speculating — and then he made a discovery. The paper pad that had engrossed his attention earlier in the evening lay on the table near the tray of developer, some of which had spilled over the edge, and on the sheet thus wet by the liquid he read these words: —

now a friend
an unseen face,
the rose

Startled beyond measure, March nervously spread the developer over the whole of the paper and was rewarded by seeing darken slowly on the sheet the following lines: —

If thou wouldst know a friend unknown,
If thou wouldst see an unseen face,
Search in the heart of the rose unblown —
Read what the winds on the waters trace.

Robert March could have given afterward but a vague account of his subsequent proceedings that memorable night. He had a confused recollection of soaking with developer all the blank paper within reach, and of feverishly continuing his experiments till the first cold rays of dawn shone feebly in upon him.

His room-mate, who came in late, he remembered, seemed to take much interest in his wonderful discoveries. John Barden was also an enthusiastic photographer, something of a chemist, a dabbler in all kinds of novel experiments, and a good fellow withal. He gave many suggestions to March, who eagerly devoted all his leisure for several weeks to endeavors to further develop the art of thought photography, for which he sought vainly for a scientific basis. He read treatises on abstruse subjects, took snap shots of his own and other people's staring eyes, and made time exposures. He tried slow plates, rapid plates, non-halation plates, and yards of film. He experimented with every variety of paper, tried everything he could think of himself and dozens of things emanating from the fertile brain of Barden, but had no further success whatever, and would doubtless have given up in despair had it not been for John's boundless optimism.

One day, when March had about made up his mind to abandon his fruitless labors, Barden came into the room and tossed him a roll of film.

"Say, March, old man," he exclaimed, "try that!"

"What's the use — haven't I tried a hundred?"

"No, sir, not like that!"

"Just like the rest, and you know it."

Barden made no reply, but came nearer and pointed to a small label with which the end of the roll was pasted: "Rose & Waters, Stationers and Photographic Outfitters."

"Well, what of it?" March asked.

"Use your head, man — think a little. Here's an answer to your mystic poetry. It's the language of symbolism, to be sure, but what does it say about a 'Rose unblown,' and what the winds trace on the 'Waters'?"

March laughed outright. "John," he cried, "you're crazy."

But he tried the film, and after that solemnly vowed to call no one fool! On every exposure of the Rose & Waters film he got a picture. All that was necessary was to hold the camera up, gaze a moment at the closed shutter, and then pass to the next number on the roll.

But the resulting photographs were curious in the extreme. Some showed a few treetops with a mountain in the distance, or the dim outline of a cloud. Some exhibited a bit of water with a pond lily or a grassy bank at the side. Some were only nebulous spots, grouped strangely together. One was a shadowy and darkly draped figure. And one — one was another picture of the mysterious lady!

After that, March's enthusiasm knew no bounds. He continued his experiments and got other pictures and more mysterious messages on films and paper that John procured.

So absorbed did he become in the mystery and fascination of the new art that he felt little interest in his approaching summer vacation, except that it would afford greater leisure for the prosecution of his alluring investigation. He was to join a little house party to be given by John's sister, Ruth, at their cottage in the Berkshires. Besides Ruth there were to be three other girls, including her old school friend, Frances Trenslow, who had been absent in Europe a couple of years, and of whom Robert March had often heard but had never seen. Two young men from Boston completed a congenial party.

Mrs. Barden and Ruth were on the piazza to welcome John and his friend when they drove up, and as March mounted the steps two other young ladies rose from rattan rockers to be presented.

"Miss Ballard; Miss Trenslow."

Robert stood as if in a dream, overcome by a torrent of indescribable emotions. In this beautiful girl, Miss Trenslow, a hundred times more lovely than he had ever imagined, a palpitating creature of flesh and blood, he recognized the prototype of his mysterious photograph!

As he stood staring helplessly, expecting to find it all unreal, he was roused by John's question: —

"What's the matter? Are you ill — or is it the heat?"

"Yes, it's the heat," answered March with an effort, trying to collect his scattered wits as they entered the house together.

"What an astonishing thing!" thought he, in the privacy of his chamber. "How did her image ever get into my sub-consciousness? Does the picture of some woman exist unknown and hidden in every man's heart and mind? Was the lovely girl I have just met indeed already bound to my life by subtile and unsuspected ties? How charming she is! I must surely keep my secret."

That night at dinner the conversation turned on thought photography, and Robert, though now rather averse to the subject, soon found himself describing some of his experiments and answering the eager questions of Miss Ballard and the young men from Boston, who evinced lively and genuine interest in the new science, and he went on earnestly and enthusiastically, adding that he should be pleased to show them convincing proofs.

"Oh, do! please do, Mr. March!" came the pleading chorus — and then Robert, realizing that his most convincing proof was printed from Negative No. 12, a portrait whose original sat demurely opposite, became suddenly mute, moist and carmine.

During the brief outing thus begun March found no opportunity, under the peculiar circumstances, to do the experimenting he had promised himself, though he was continually importuned to do so, especially after John Barden had one evening more than hinted at the existence of two "thought portraits" of a lady. Then he had no peace till he consented to make some experiments in the presence of the others, and agreed that the last Saturday

night of their stay should be devoted to "a demonstration of the power of thought in photography," as John called it.

On Saturday Robert found a note tucked under his door: —

"Come down in the lane by the brook at 10 o'clock."

It was undated and unsigned, but March felt sure that it came from Miss Trenslow, and was hardly surprised to discover that the writing was the same as that of his mysterious quatrain. He was getting used to surprises.

Robert had had several walks and talks with Fanny, in which the subject of thought photography had never been mentioned, but his eyes had been opened to the realization that, if Fate had really chosen for him, his own heart ratified the choice with an ardor he had not thought possible. It was therefore with anxiety that he sought the unlooked-for tryst, and found a very serious and troubled look on Miss Trenslow's lovely face as she held out her hand and said quickly: —

"Mr. March, I have done you, unconsciously, a great injury. You have been completely deceived in all your apparent discoveries in thought photography, I am ashamed to say, almost entirely through my agency. I was in New York a few weeks ago, and your room-mate took a picture of me with your camera, thinking you would make a double exposure and get a "ghost" of me, but never imagining what really happened. Then I wrote that miserable doggerel, to try a new sympathetic ink he was experimenting with, and before he was ready to develop it you did so accidentally. The joke had gone so far beyond his expectations that he wrote me about it, and I took those fantastic pictures and sent the films down to him. It all seemed such an innocent hoax — but now that I realize how serious a matter it is, I just *had* to tell you, even if you can never forgive me!"

Surprise, dismay, chagrin and humiliation rapidly succeeded each other in March's mind as this revelation went on, but at its conclusion he had so far recovered from the shock to his sensibilities as to be able to answer calmly: —

"I thank you very much, Miss Trenslow, for taking me into your confidence before John had a chance to play another prank upon me before the others. And now — now will you do me another and still greater favor?"

The bright look of relief breaking through the pink flush that now suffused the sweet countenance was his sufficient answer before he added: "Promise to help me get even with John."

What they talked about in the long half hour they loitered in the lane interested only themselves and the sole spectator, a little donkey with big ears, browsing down by the pasture wall. When Robert returned from a hasty trip to the house Fanny was sitting on the wall smiling across the sunny landscape, the troubled look quite vanished from her eyes.

The thought photography séance that last night of vacation was a great success. March suggested that the experiments would be much more likely to be favorable if those present would concentrate their thoughts on some one thing, and Fanny proposed that they all think of Mr. Barden. The young people accepted the proposition unanimously, and all gazed at the camera with the avowed intention of thinking of John Barden.

The first picture developed proved to be that of a donkey, and created a laugh. The second was another donkey, and evoked a roar. With a third donkey came jibes at John's expense, increasing with successive donkeys. At the sixth or seventh he broke away from the circle around the ruby lamp and flung out of the room, half in anger and half in amusement, letting in a flood of white light which, March declared, spoiled all the rest of the films. Robert March was fully revenged, and John Barden realized that the vital principle of thought photography had been betrayed by his fair confederate, and that he was now the victim instead of the perpetrator of a successful practical joke.

. . . . . .

Over the desk of Robert March now hang two small photographs — one of his beautiful wife, printed from Negative No. 12, and the other of a little donkey with large ears. They are cherished mementoes of the most important and daring experiment of his life — and one that has been highly successful.

Manuel, of the Guardia Civil.*

BY CHARLES BRYANT HOWARD.

CLOSE to the right bank of the Pasig River, about two miles up from Manila town, there stood a commodious and stoutly built "nipa" hut — rather larger than the others in the little "pueblo," and bearing a still greater resemblance to an exaggerated hairy bug — inhabited by a stalwart, gray-headed "Filipino," Manuel by name, and his wife. I had the honor of becoming their next-door neighbor, and before I had been long a resident, I grew to be very much interested in the old couple, having observed them nearly every evening from the window of my "sala," at which I usually sat and cooled off in pajamas after returning from the office. One has plenty of time to observe in the Philippines, owing to a prevailing disinclination to do anything calling for the exercise of greater energy.

The lady of the house was evidently an inveterate scold, and poor Manuel came in for a wigging every night, which generally commenced immediately after my arrival at home — partly for my benefit, I am inclined to think, for she invariably started off in badly pronounced Spanish, a language which she rightly assumed I understood, relapsing into her native Tegalan as her excitement increased, and culminating with a series of long-drawn and particularly uncouth yells, at the meaning of which I was enabled to make a fairly shrewd guess, for at this point Manuel generally came out, with a gait and attitude as of one propelled from behind, frequently accompanied by a broom or other domestic utensil. Then he would light a cheroot and sit on the steps with his head in his hands, the picture of philosophical endurance, while the voice of the woman inside would gradually subside, until she remembered herself and her education, and wound up with a list of

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Spanish objurgations, repeated with marvelous rapidity, reflecting upon her husband's ancestry, personal appearance, and mental, physical, and other qualities, which did credit to her ingenuity.

This entertaining program used to be carried out with great regularity, and I came to rather look forward to it as I rode home after business hours. Now and then it would be varied by sounds which were apparently caused by the upsetting of bamboo furniture and the hurling of various articles about the hut's interior, and on these occasions Manuel would make his appearance outside at an earlier stage of the proceedings than usual.

It eventually came to be a great source of wonder and curiosity to me that Manuel never, by word or deed, seemed to resent his better half's treatment, and I gradually began to have a feeling of something like contempt for the old chap, for, physically, he was a wonderfully fine specimen of his race, with an extraordinary muscular development, though I noticed that he was slightly lame, evidently from an old wound on his leg, for a dull white scar ran from knee to foot, contrasting oddly with his dark brown skin. His wife was an active but wizened-up little creature, and could not have weighed over ninety pounds.

One evening, when the old woman seemed to be in particularly good form, and Manuel had issued forth earlier in consequence, I leaned out of my window during a lull in the uproar and called to him: "Que ay, amigo?" (What is the trouble, my friend?)

He glanced up wearily. "Nada, señor," he answered, in a tone which spoke volumes of resignation. I couldn't stand it any longer, and, slipping on a "kimono," or Japanese wrapper, over my pajamas, went out to interview him. The old woman's head popped out the doorway as I pushed through the intervening hedge, and then popped back again, like an inconceivably hideous Jack-in-the-box, while her scolding subsided into an unmusical murmur.

"Buenas noches, señor," said Manuel, rising as I approached.

"Good evening," I replied, "don't get up. I will sit down also."

I gave him a cigar, a real "Imperial," very long and black, — the best and most expensive cigar made in Manila — and from the fact that he tucked it away in his trousers, I inferred that his sense of economy prevented his discarding the freshly lighted

cheroot he was smoking with a green leaf wrapped around the end for a mouthpiece.

"Gracias, señor," he said, and thereby betrayed the fact that he had seen better days; for the average Filipino having no word in his own language to signify gratitude, seldom takes the trouble to express it in Spanish, usually accepting a gift in silence and mentally considering the giver an improvident idiot.

"Thy wife is very fond of talking, Manuel," said I, by way of starting a conversation.

This very evident fact he admitted with a "Si, señor."

"Have you been married long?" I then inquired, involuntarily saying "you" instead of the familiar "thou," which is used in addressing low-class natives, for the old fellow's manner was that of a Castilian grandee.

"Forty-five years, señor."

"And has she always been so fond of talking?" said I, feeling like an infernal cad for my impertinence. But Manuel did not seem offended, for he answered: —

"Si, señor, but not always in the tone your grace has heard." This in much better Spanish than my own.

I felt rather at a loss how to continue, and sat in silence for a few moments, while he puffed abstractedly at his cheroot.

Then I noticed the scar on his leg, and tried another tack.

"Do you mind telling me how you received that scar, Manuel?" I asked.

"No, señor," he replied, giving his leg a twist and glancing down at it. Then he turned and looked at me from under his heavy, yoke-like eyebrows. "It is a long story, señor, but it will explain to your grace what your grace would also probably like to know — why I do not resent the insults from my 'mujer,' which your grace has heard from the 'casa' of your grace so often."

This was straight from the shoulder, certainly, and "my grace" felt considerably abashed for a moment under his steady gaze. Then, rather to my relief, he went on without giving me time to reply.

"Your grace has heard of the mutiny of the native troops in Cavite many years ago?"

I nodded, for I had not only heard of it, but had had nightmares afterwards, based upon the recital.

"Long before that I was a soldier in the infantry, and I was in the regiment which was sent south to Mindanao to suppress the 'Moro' uprising. I did good service, for I was the strongest man in the regiment, and I had a beautiful 'bolo' with a blade fourteen inches long and as broad as your grace's hand; and on the back of the blade I filed a notch for every Moro I killed with it. It was a beautiful bolo, and the Spanish officers offered me many pesos for it, but I would not sell it, for it had belonged to my father, and he had carved the hilt as none but he could carve hilts of bolos. When we returned to Manila there were nine notches in the back of the blade, and I was a corporal, for it does not suit Filipinos to fight as the Spaniards fight, by shooting at great distances, and we used to leave the white soldiers far behind and wait for them to come up after the fighting was over.

"For good conduct I was transferred into the Guardia Civil of Manila, and, as a Guardia, I served many years. I had been married and we had one son, and he was more than the idol and joy of his mother's heart, — for my wife is a Visayan, and the love of a Visayan woman for her first-born is beyond the knowledge of a man. He grew to be like me in strength and stature, a marvel among men, and I was proud of him, and prouder yet to see how my mujer gloried in and loved him for his strength and size, for it made him like me — me, a member of the ever-to-be-trusted Guardia Civil, with my Mindanao medal to wear at the fiestas.

"And at last he, our José, was enlisted in the infantry as I had been, and my mujer wept as she stood beside me and saw him march in the ranks, from pride that her 'muchacho' was the tallest man in the line, and his shoulders were those of a man and a half, — and a Visayan woman seldom weeps. But I, I who had been a soldier did not weep, though I felt sad and doubtful, for I knew that the Spanish officers were not as they had been in my day, and that there was discontent among the lines. But I gave him my bolo to wear and use, — the one with the nine notches in the back of the blade, señor, with the hilt which had been carved by my father.

"We saw him but seldom after that, and knew not where he

was stationed, for the infantry soldier in the service of Spain has little time but to serve, and sometimes his mother would grieve because he was not there with her, and then rejoice because another day had gone and the end of his service was nearer.

"Then came the mutiny. Your grace knows, sin dudo, how it was arranged that the regiments in Cavite should kill their officers and the white residents, and then send up a rocket as a signal to the troops in Manila to do the same and capture the city. But your grace, perhaps, does not know that it was through the Guardia Civil that word of the uprising was sent to the Comandante in Manila; for the Guardia Civil, — of which I was one, señor, — whatever its sympathies are, is true to the cause to which it is sworn — as true as the steel of a bolo — and some 'loco' among the mutineers had told a friend who was a Guardia. And when the rocket went up from Cavite, the troops in Manila had been disarmed, and we, with the white troops, were on our way to Cavite.

"When we landed, the mutineers had fled and were hiding; but they had done their work, and when I saw it — ah, señor, the poor white señoras and little children! — my blood became like the hot yellow wine which the Ingleses drink with soda-water, and I cared not that the mutineers were my countrymen or that the bodies were those of Spanish. Our hearts cried out for vengeance, and we obeyed the orders to enter every nipa-hut in Cavite and drive our bayonets through the floor — for it was under them that the mutineers were hiding — and the scars of our bayonets are there in the huts of Cavite to-day. I entered two huts and thrust my bayonet through the floor of each until the screams below ceased. Then I entered a third, and thrust, and there were no screams, but a hand with a bolo came up through the floor and gashed my leg, as your grace sees. I put my foot on the bolo and thrust again with all my great strength; and then the hand relaxed and the fingers opened and shut and tore at the bamboo strips on the floor like a cat's claws — and I saw that the bolo had nine notches in the back of the blade and that the handle had been carved by my father.

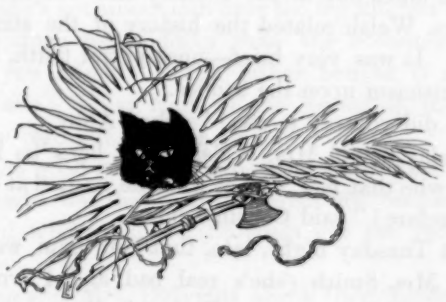
"Our son, the pride and joy of his mother's heart — a Visayan woman's heart, señor — was buried in the ditch in Cavite with

the others, and I, his father, who had loved him and killed him — I placed him in it — for I was a member of the Guardia Civil.

"That is the cause, señor, of the scar on my leg, and also the cause of my not resenting the insults from my mujer; for I had killed her first-born and destroyed her joy in life. The insults of a woman to a man are but little to the loss of her first-born to a Visayan woman; and if she can bear her loss the better that I should bear in meekness what she says or does to me in her anger, may we both live a thousand years.

"Gracias, señor, for listening to the talk of a viejo. It was a long story."

I left the heart-broken, chivalrous old soldier sitting on the steps, smoking a fresh cheroot, and gazing away across the brown fields and gleaming river, toward where the glow from Cavite, down the bay, faintly lit the evening sky, under the Southern Cross. Later that evening I had occasion to walk over to the Club, and as I passed the hut, old Manuel was not visible, but his mujer was sitting on the steps, and she was smoking a long, black "Imperial" cigar.



The Lynchpin Sensation.*

BY JOANNA E. WOOD.

TWO or three Lynchpin people had seen the stranger go into Rufus Stone's house, but no one had seen him leave. This fact might not have been so commented upon if any one had known who the stranger was or what his business was, but no one did. Rufus Stone and his sister, Rebecca, made no explanations, though it is due to the Lynchpin people to say that they were given every opportunity. This seemed conclusive evidence that they were utterly without the proper spirit; Lynchpin fretted over this.

Mrs. Welsh, admittedly the most forehanded woman in Lynchpin, so demeaned herself as to go over to Rebecca Stone's and borrow a cup of molasses of which she had no need, but it was considered a compliment in Lynchpin to go borrowing, and Mrs. Welsh thought that the honor might loosen Rebecca's tongue. Mrs. Welsh got the molasses but no information.

Cousin Abby came to visit Mrs. Welsh that afternoon. Cousin Abby lived ten miles out in the country and was therefore eager for news. Mrs. Welsh related the history of the stranger's visit to the Stones. It was very brief—one central truth, several surmises, much criticism upon the Stones.

"What day did you say it was?" asked Abby.

"Last Tuesday," said Mrs. Welsh, "and here 'tis Monday, and no one knows who that man was or what he wanted at Stoneses'!"

"Well, I declare!" said Cousin Abby.

"'Twas last Tuesday night, late, that our Sam was going for the doctor for Mrs. Smith (she's real bad, and I wouldn't be a mite surprised if she never rose off that bed), and he met Rufe Stone driving to beat all. He had the team and the democrat wagon with the second seat out and something long in the bottom — wrapped up in a sheet it was — looked almost like a dead

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pig, Sam said — but pshaw! Nobody ain't killing pigs this time of year! Sam, he hinted as much as he could, and told Rufe right out where he was going, but Rufe never opened up, and Sam says he was in such a hurry he would hardly stop to speak."

"Abby," said Mrs. Welsh impressively, "there's something queer goin' on!"

"Looks like it!" said Cousin Abby. Just then Mrs. Didymus came in.

The talk naturally reverted to the Stones. Mrs. Welsh related what Cousin Abby had told her, Cousin Abby corroborating her as she proceeded. When Mrs. Welsh finished Mrs. Didymus took up the parable.

"Well!" said she. "It's mighty queer! Rufe Stone came over last Thursday and paid Pa Didymus that twenty dollars he's been owing on the disk harrow, and Rebecca sent over for Rose to come help her make a new best dress; brown merino 'tis, with black trimming, yards of it, and stiffening round the skirt; of course Rose went! She's that stubborn! But where the Stoneses get the money beats me! There ain't anything selling now, far's I can see."

"If the Stoneses have anything to sell, it's more than the rest of us have," said Cousin Abby.

"Rebecca Stone's terrible big feeling," said Mrs. Welsh. "Do you believe, she's got an oilcloth over the big kitchen table! Land! That table's done better folks than the Stoneses without any cover. Do you mind? Rufe's father bought it at old Henry Hardwick's sale; it was made of the big maple, the biggest tree in the county before it was cut down."

"There's no good comes of such goings on," said Cousin Abby. "But say — who was that man that went into Stoneses'? what did he want, and where did the Stoneses get the money all of a sudden?"

Mrs. Welsh and Mrs. Didymus shook their heads. Presently, with an affectation of most friendly confidence, Mrs. Welsh plunged into another subject.

"How time flies!" she said to Mrs. Didymus. "I declare, Rose is most eighteen, ain't she?"

"In two weeks," said Mrs. Didymus grimly.

"Do tell! It makes a person reminis'! And—"

"And she has to have a thousand dollars cash in her hand," said Mrs. Didymus, as one who in sheer desperation anticipates a climax. "A thousand dollars! Sakes! It makes me feel queer to think of it, but Pa Didymus, he says it's hers by law, and he'll give it to her, and he hopes no harm will come of it."

"What does she calculate to do with it?" asked Cousin Abby curiously.

"Oh, the land knows! Pa Didymus wanted her to buy that field next our spring medder, and he'd work it for her and she could live with us, paying board of course, but when pa spoke to her about it she says, as cool as you please, 'I'm not going to buy land with my thousand.' 'Then what be you going to buy?' says pa, at his wits' end. 'I don't know,' says she. Fancy that chit with a thousand dollars! She's never had the spending of one dollar in her life!"

"I can believe that," said Mrs. Welsh heartily.

Afterwards Mrs. Didymus wondered if she "meant anything."

"How's Uncle Didymus?" asked Cousin Abby.

"Oh, he's well, sitting on his money bags and never giving any of his blood relations a cent," said Mrs. Didymus with asperity.

"Nor no one else, either!" said Cousin Abby.

"Rufe Stone seems to be running after the old man considerable of late," said Mrs. Welsh.

"Yes. Like's not thinking he'll get something under the will! But I guess even Uncle Didymus wouldn't dare to leave his money past his own flesh and blood. It's got to come back to the Didymuses sometime."

"Well, you know it's never safe to reckon on leavings," said Mrs. Welsh. "If Rufe Stone's sly enough, he might get round the old man and get his pile."

"It would be inflooence, then!" said Mrs. Didymus, quite excited. "Inflooence! That's what it would be. My soul! I should think them Stones would be ashamed to look people in the face. Where did they get the money they're throwing right and left now, I'd like to know?"

Mrs. Didymus soon after this departed.

"Well," said Mrs. Welsh, "Susan Didymus just makes me

sick! Did you hear her talk about Rose's thousand? Lands! You'd think it was coming out of her pocket. Every one knows Rose's father left it to her safe in the bank, and the Didymuses to have the interest on it for giving Rose a home, and Rose has done every stitch of sewing for all their children for the last two years. She's a nice girl, Rose Didymus. Your Sam might do enough sight worse than to get her."

Then talk drifted into other channels.

At twilight Cousin Abby's son called for her. As the final farewells were being said beside the buggy, Rufus Stone drove by, a tall young countryman, with a square-jawed face, hard bitten by wind and sun, a bleached moustache, and speculative eyes.

"Abby! Isn't it queer about the Stoneses!" said Mrs. Welsh.

"It's more than queer! It's fairly creepy!" said Cousin Abby.

The ladies parted, feeling they had spent a pleasant and profitable afternoon.

. . . . . .

Rufus Stone and his sister were regarded with prejudice in Lynchpin. In one thing they were aliens, the only people in Lynchpin who had not been born in it. Their father and mother had strayed into Lynchpin from the outside, by mistake it would seem, for they never felt at home there, and the Lynchpin folk regarded them as the chosen people did the Gentiles. Lynchpin was a little hide-bound country village, very wise in its own conceit. Its streets and views were alike narrow. It nestled at the foot of a long ridge, known as "the mountain." Behind Lynchpin the rise was very abrupt. Immediately upon the other side was the village of Cubeb. But there was no communication between the two. The railway had built the district station in Cubeb, instead of in Lynchpin. That was the end of all friendly relations. Upon the rare occasions when Lynchpin people traveled they drove ten miles over rugged country roads, and took the train at the market town. The Lynchpin people found a stern satisfaction in doing this, and indeed it was a great aggravation to Cubeb.

The Cubeb young ladies never had Lynchpin lovers, and no Lynchpin girl would have listened to a Cubeb wooer. The road

which led over the hill was as grass grown as the road which led to the old quarry upon the Stone farm. Rufus's father had paid a good price for the farm, half of the acreage of which was unarable land upon the mountain side. He had hoped to recoup himself by opening a stone quarry. It was indeed opened, but proved a failure, like everything else he undertook. All that was left of it was a great gaping hole, into which the rains and spring freshets washed the rich leaf mold from the woods above.

. . . . . .

Always absorbed in its own affairs, certain circumstances soon transpired in Lynchpin which rendered it completely oblivious to the outside world.

Mr. Didymus paid Rose her thousand dollars in quite dramatic fashion, with Mr. Welsh as witness. Rose, a very sweet-faced girl, with patient brow and intelligent eyes, took her money and thanked him. There was a pause. Rose, sitting in the stiff wooden chair, her hand tight clasped over the little roll in the pocket of her frilled white apron, looked out at the open window where the pale purple plumes of the lilacs bent above the gate. Her eyes were almost absent looking, her lips were curved tenderly.

"Well?" said Mr. Didymus, and the inflection of his voice gave the effect of one who has waited long and grown impatient. "Well, don't you want me to keep it for you?"

"Oh!" said Rose, rousing herself. "Thank you. No, you have had plenty of trouble already." Then she rose and left the room, very quietly, and in a matter-of-fact way entirely out of keeping with the spirit of the occasion.

"There!" said Mrs. Didymus. "What do you think of that?"

"She seems terrible independent," said Mr. Welsh.

"I don't know what wimmen is coming to," said Mr. Didymus.

Mr. Welsh went home and related the matter to his wife. "The Didymuses won't get their claws on that thousand again, or I'm mistaken," said he. "That little Rose is a mighty sensible girl!"

"She is," said Mrs. Welsh. "Cousin Abby's Sam would do a mighty good thing to make up to her."

"He would," said her husband. "With that thousand he could pay off the last mortgage."

Rose Didymus was not seen again in Lynchpin. Her bed was not slept in that night. Her clothes were left; nothing was gone but Rose and the thousand dollars. Excitement was intense. Every individual in the village had his or her own opinion. The one prevailing sentiment was sympathy for the Didymus family. The speculation in regard to the disappearance of Rose recalled the speculation in regard to the mysterious stranger at the Stones'. The two became insensibly associated. Mysteries are always akin. The cumulative effect of these two inexplicable happenings was to direct a strange suspicion towards Rufus Stone and his sister Rebecca, who seemed more prosperous, more content at this time than they had ever been before in all their meager lives. Various packages of books were known to have arrived at the village post-office for Rufus. Rebecca wore ("flaunted," Mrs. Welsh said) her new merino upon occasions when her five-year-old drab moreen would have seemed more suitable, and no one had heard either of them hazard an opinion in regard to the burning question of the hour. Rufus Stone had long felt himself alone in the community. He gradually became aware that he was now regarded with distrust. As Rebecca walked up the church aisle on Sundays her face was covered with timorous blushes. There was something strangely ominous in the social atmosphere of Lynchpin; yet not one word had been breathed of definite accusation, though from the mists of prejudice and shreds of suspicion a sinister thought was taking shape in the minds of the people.

Mrs. Welsh and Mrs. Didymus communed daily, Mrs. Didymus dilating upon the affectionate relations between herself and the lost Rose, lamenting the latter's waywardness, and hoping no harm would come to her in Boston, for it was her idea that Rose had taken her money and gone to that great place vaguely called "the city." It was in one of these conversations that Mrs. Welsh said solemnly, "She may be in Boston — or she may not."

"Jane Welsh, what do you mean?" said Mrs. Didymus, gasping.

"I mean," said Mrs. Welsh doggedly, "that a slip of a girl with a thousand dollars in her apron pocket wouldn't be no match for a tramp or — or — a bad disposed person that wanted money to throw away."

Mrs. Didymus paled in earnest now. She had been hard and exacting upon her niece, but — she thought how soft her hair had been when she was too little to comb it herself, and then she fell a-crying. From that moment the suspicion of foul play laid hold of the village imagination.

Mrs. Didymus went to Uncle Didymus, the richest and most solitary man in the village, and asked his opinion, wondering if he would like a detective to be brought, at his expense, to look after Rose. Uncle Didymus expressed himself in most contemptuous fashion upon the murder theory, gave Mrs. Didymus an unflattering *résumé* of her treatment of Rose, and advised her to go home and attend to her business and think over how she had treated the motherless girl.

Mrs. Didymus gave Mrs. Welsh an account of the interview (with certain reservations).

"It's dreadful to hear him talk! And him living all alone with all that money in the house," said Mrs. Didymus. "You'd think there was no such things as burglars and murderers."

"I suppose Uncle Didymus has a heap of money stowed away?" said Mrs. Welsh curiously.

"Thousands," said Mrs. Didymus emphatically. Somehow it seemed to put Uncle Didymus in a worse light than ever to accentuate his wealth.

"Wasn't Rose staying at Stoneses' just before she went away?" asked Mr. Welsh of Mr. Didymus one day.

"She was — she was — By gum! George, the Stoneses may know something about her plans."

"Like as not," said Mr. Welsh. "They were pretty thick, weren't they?"

"Yes, they were," said Mr. Didymus. "Yes, they were! I'll have it out with Rufe Stone this very day."

"You better not tackle him alone," said Mr. Welsh. "Fact is," with a burst of confidence, "what do we know about the Stoneses anyhow? Nothing. For all we know, his father might have run away from Something when he came here. Rufe comes up to the post-office in the evening; you better happen along and ask him there."

Thus it was that when Rufus Stone entered the post-office that night all male Lynchpin was there.

"Rufe," said Mr. Didymus, conscious that public opinion, which is such a great moral support, was with him, "Rufe, I want to speak to you about Rose."

A dull red crept up under the tanned skin of Rufus Stone.

"This isn't the place," he began.

Mr. Didymus had seen the change of color, had felt the electric thrill of sympathetic curiosity which stirred his audience. His tone was distinctly aggressive, even menacing, as he said: —

"Yes, it is the place, and the time, too, Rufe Stone. I want to know about my niece, Rose, *and* her thousand dollars." An intolerable emphasis made his words sting. "I want to know what has become of her and her money. Do you know anything about it?"

Rufus Stone's eyes blazed — the red upon his face was patchy — he looked like a man fairly cornered, ready to spring at any one, or like a just man unjustly accused and so angry as to be deprived of speech.

"She was at your house the last few days she was here," continued Mr. Didymus, "and I believe you know something about her."

"Believe and be d—d to you!" said Rufus, regaining his voice. He was pale now as an angry wraith; he looked at Didymus and around upon the others, with contempt breaking the firm line of his lips into a sneer. Then he left — left beneath the pall of a dark suspicion.

The excitement in Lynchpin became almost hysteric, when Mrs. Butler, who did Uncle Didymus's washing, came running down the village street one Monday morning proclaiming that "old Mr. Didymus was murdered."

The trinity of Lynchpin mysteries was now complete.

Old Uncle Didymus was missing, his rooms were in wild disorder, the drawers of the old bureau had been turned over as if in mad haste, clothing was strewn over the floors, the wardrobe drawers had been taken out completely and left standing empty upon chairs.

The covers of the bed were flung back, as if the old man had prepared to retire. There was blood upon it, and one of the pillow cases had been torn in two, and there were bloody finger

prints upon the fragment which remained. The cake of yellow soap beside the tin basin in the kitchen had the same ominous red smears upon it, and a little water left in the basin was reddened. Where was the body? The search was carried on vigorously. The women remarked that there was no bed linen in the house save such as was upon the bed. What horrible bundle had been enwrapped in Uncle Didymus's linen sheets, about which he was so particular?

That afternoon Rufus Stone was seen going through his back pasture towards the hillside with a spade over his shoulder. Little Benny, the bound boy at Mr. Welsh's, had been out late the night before, searching in the summer night for strayed calves. He had found them in Uncle Didymus's wheat. Rufus Stone, coming by at the time, had helped to get them out of the grain, and turned them down the road towards home. But Benny didn't know what direction Rufus came from when he encountered him. He had simply appeared beside him from out the dimness of the night.

The Lynchpin people were fairly roused now, and sent over to the market town for the police. Mr. Didymus and Mr. Welsh had a long confab with them, which resulted in the two officers going to the Stone house and asking for Rufus. Miss Rebecca was packing a trunk in the kitchen when they arrived. She said her brother would be back soon; she was expecting him every minute. It was very warm. Would they not wait till he returned? He would not be long. At length, very reluctantly, she told them his whereabouts. He was, it seemed, at the old quarry upon the hillside. The old quarry! The men looked at each other. What was he doing there? Miss Rebecca, a somewhat stately young woman, grew a little red at the continued questioning and gave an evasive answer. Where was the trunk she was packing to go? After propounding this question, the two men found the door shut in their faces, very gently, but with decision.

So they went back to the village street, where the men and women stood in knots talking in half whispers, for horror had fallen upon them, and even in the sunshine they felt afraid.

Presently the male population was moving off up the unused road over the hill, and when the men came to the gate which

gave access to the stone quarry they found a fresh wagon track leading into it, and followed it till they came near the brink of the quarry. The officers paused, asked the men to be silent, and advanced to the brink. They looked down. A man with his coat off was digging a hole — a hole of the length of a grave. He was working silently and with energy. The officers, standing upon an overhanging ledge, could not see what was directly beneath them, but the rounded end of another mound was visible.

The officers beckoned to the men, who drew near quietly. So presently Rufus Stone looked up, to see a fringe of pale, angry faces bending upon him — to find himself caught like a creature in a trap. He flung down his spade and looked up at them. They answered his silent look with an execration, and with one accord began scrambling down into the cup-like depression of the quarry, where the air was heavy, warm, and steamy, for the sun beat all day long upon the stone walls. A certain faintness came over Mr. Didymus. Rose had been his brother's child. Was he to find her here? And in the momentary pause before the officer spoke, Rufus Stone laughed aloud. It was almost too much for the men, whose nerves were already tense. Mr. Welsh, who was a nervous man, whimpered.

They looked about and saw that the bottom of the quarry was filled with mounds — broad, low mounds — from two or three of which jutted clusters of mushrooms.

"We have come to arrest you upon suspicion of having murdered Henry Didymus," said the officer.

"Very good," said Rufus Stone. "Wait till I get my coat." He found it and put it on.

"What do you think of my mushrooms?" he said to the officer.

"You are under arrest," said the latter. "Anything you say will be used against you."

"About mushrooms?" queried Rufus Stone.

He looked on grimly while, under the directions of the officers, the men dug up the mushroom beds, for such they were, constructed in the most scientific fashion, too, and in various stages of progression. The search was exhaustive, but nothing suspicious was found. The officers, however, took their prisoner away, and Lynchpin exhausted itself in surmises.

The day of the prisoner's examination came, when Rufus Stone was called to answer to the charge of murder, and the preliminaries were all gone through, though Lynchpin, looking about the court room, saw Uncle Didymus, Rose, and Rebecca Stone all sitting together.

Lynchpin never forgot the remarks of the judge when this fact was made known to him.

Uncle Didymus asked leave to address the court, which he did with malignant eloquence. It was astonishing how young Uncle Didymus looked, away from his old surroundings, and amazing how Rebecca Stone smiled and blushed when he looked at her, and shameless how Rufus Stone and Rose ogled each other.

And Uncle Didymus regaled the court with a discourse which cast unpleasant side lights upon the Lynchpin charity, and upon the tender mercies of Mrs. Didymus towards her niece. He told how he had bought a house in Cubeb and sent Rose there, the moment she was free and had her money, where she had been ever since with a servant. ("A servant!" said Lynchpin below its breath.) He told how he himself had moved to Cubeb a few days before, taking such of his clothes and linen as he wished. He had chosen to go in the night, he said, and smiled grimly. That had been his little joke on Lynchpin. His hand was still bound up. He had cut it severely upon a broken glass the night he moved.

Before the court was dismissed Rufus asked damages for the destruction of his mushroom beds, basing the sum of his claim upon accounts rendered from a Boston fruiterer to whom he had shipped the mushrooms, simply going over the crest of the hill with them to the Cubeb railway station. The judge gave a verdict for the damages, which Mr. Didymus had to pay, as he had been the means of accusing Rufus.

So the Lynchpin people returned, feeling very sore. In due time Rose and Rufus, Rebecca and Uncle Didymus married, and the two households live very comfortably in Cubeb, where Rufus's experiment in growing mushrooms in the old quarry has been extended into one of the finest market gardens of the country.

Lynchpin was greatly aggrieved over these things, but worse than all, it never found out who the stranger was who entered

Rufus Stone's that Tuesday and departed unseen, nor what was the burden Rufus carried in the democrat wagon that night — yet it was very simple. Rufus took the newspapers, and in one had seen the advertisement of a violin maker in Boston offering an extravagant price for old maple — the older the better. Brave Rebecca knew how hard were the straits through which Rufus passed for lack of money. They consulted together; the advertisement was answered. The old violin maker came, saw the top of their old kitchen table, was delighted with it, paid for it, and departed through the pasture to the Cubeb station. Rufus wrapped up the table top and took it away by night, for he was sensitive over his poverty! Next day Rebecca bought a new oilcloth to cover the top Rufus put on the old legs.

But these things Lynchpin did not know, and in the bosom of its families continued to mourn over the fate of the stranger at the hands of Rufus Stone.

The Lady and the Kwang-Chiu.*

BY FRANK L. POLLOCK.

ROADWAY was in the state of congestion it usually attains about four o'clock on a pleasant afternoon, when a closed carriage drove slowly up the street. It stopped opposite City Hall, and a heavily veiled lady got out. She was not exactly the kind of woman one expects to see in down-town New York during business hours. She was daintily and fashionably dressed and, if one might judge from her slight figure and alert gait, she was still young; but without hesitation she turned and walked toward Park Row. As she approached the fountain in the center of City Hall Park, a Chinaman passed her, walking rapidly in the opposite direction. Apparently the crowd forced the two together, but in another minute the Chinaman was lost among the passers-by, while the lady leisurely returned to her carriage and was driven up town. They had not interchanged a glance. Nevertheless something had been passed stealthily from the lean fingers of the Oriental to the half-extended gloved hand of the veiled lady.

She dismissed the carriage at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and ascended to a room which already contained baggage marked "P. V." In about an hour she came down to the office again, paid her bill, and, ordering a cab for the Grand Central, handed the clerk a note to be forwarded by special messenger. It was addressed to Miss Florence Vandewater, 135 Madison Avenue, and it read as follows: —

FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL, 5 P. M.

Dear Florence: — I have just found that I must go to New Orleans for a month or two. I leave in half an hour. My address later. Hurriedly,

Your affectionate sister,

PRISCILLA.

Now that she had removed her veil, it was evident that Miss

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Priscilla Vandewater was a young woman of about thirty years of age, blessed with a determined character and an enthusiastic disposition. Probably her friends would not have been greatly surprised at any time to hear that she had suddenly started off on imperative business either to the Gulf of Mexico or to the antipodes. But what was remarkable, the thing that no one but herself and the ticket agent knew and only the Chinaman could have suspected, was the fact that the ticket she carried in her traveling bag was marked, not for New Orleans but, *via* San Francisco, for Hong Kong.

During the whole afternoon the girl had kept stern command over herself; her face had remained impassive; one could have seen in it but one expression, determination. But when she entered the train at last and felt herself safe in her sleeping compartment, she ventured to relax a little. Wrinkles of anxiety gathered about her eyes and her hand trembled as she put it to her bosom and took out the parcel handed to her in the park. It was a tiny round box, much like a pill box, but of metal and lacquered a bright yellow. On this yellow were printed numerous Chinese characters in red, which she examined critically and eagerly. Then, with a nervous movement, she unhasped the lid and took out a round, yellowish stone, which fitted closely into the box and was ornamented with a peculiar carved design. A momentary scrutiny of this seemed to satisfy her, and with a sigh of relief she replaced it in the box, closed the lid, and once more concealed the casket in her bosom. After this, throughout the journey, although no one saw the little yellow box, it was observed that at the slightest alarm her hand went involuntarily to her breast.

The journey was uneventful, but as it drew near its close her fellow-passengers remarked that Miss Vandewater was growing nervous. She had periods of marked depression, and her hand went more and more frequently to her breast. When the steamer arrived in Hong Kong she engaged a rickshaw and was driven at once to the American consulate, and the next day, without stopping for the sights of the town, she took a coasting steamer for Canton. It is a short run, only half an hour, but to her it seemed long. Anxiety was evidently breaking down the courage

and determination that had served her through her journey, and she felt that what was to be done must now be done quickly.

The sight of Canton seemed to increase her excitement. As soon as she arrived at the pier, she selected one among the howling mob of boatmen to ferry herself and her luggage ashore, immediately engaged a rickshaw, and offered the coolies extra money to take her as rapidly as possible first to the consulate and then to the Orient Hotel. Two hours later, pale but determined, her hand grasping her skirt pocket, which contained the yellow box and a bull-dog revolver, she was again in a rickshaw, and a fresh couple of barelegged coolies, in great trouble and perplexity of mind, were carrying her through the sights, sounds, and smells of the northeast corner of the Chinese metropolis.

It was a tedious process threading the narrow and crooked streets. At last, however, the rickshaw emerged from the denser portion of the city and stopped before a lofty brick wall which abutted on the roadway. Miss Vandewater got out and knocked sharply upon the double doorway in the center of it. In a moment a small wicket slid back and a face appeared in the opening. To this she whispered a few words in Chinese; the face scrutinized her in silence for some seconds, then it disappeared, and the wicket was abruptly closed. After a considerable delay, the coolies, who were watching, saw it open again, and the head of a monk presented itself; then after some conversation it was closed again. But in a few seconds the gate itself swung open, and, to their amazement, she disappeared within. Buddhist monks are not so strict as Trappists, but without doubt this was the first time a Caucasian, either man or woman, had ever set foot within the headquarters of the Kwang-Chiu.

In all eastern Asia the name of the Kwang-Chiu, or the "Far-Seeing Eye," is a word to be spoken under the breath. It is a vast secret organization, outwardly religious and theosophical in its nature, but really political, and it numbers its adherents in millions. Besides in China, where it is known to have existed since A. D. 920, it has branches in Paris, San Francisco, New York, Melbourne, and a hundred other cities, and it holds even the unattached Chinese in awe, as the blacks were once overawed by the Ku-Klux Klan. It is probable that it holds the power of life and

death over eight millions of people, and Chinese diplomats understand well that the Imperial dynasty stands by grace of the Grand Lama of Canton.

It has long been known that the Kwang-Chiu holds an annual celebration somewhere in the interior, consisting of religious rites and political cabals, and that no stranger is permitted to approach under penalty of torture and a horrible death. For nine centuries but one man from the West is known to have penetrated these mysteries.

Beyond the gate of the monastery Priscilla Vandewater was conducted into a little garden, where a dozen gilt statues of Buddha were ranged along the wall in various attitudes of beatific contemplation. As she followed her guide into the great brick building, a few yellow-robed and queued monks looked up and stared at her in placid wonder. She met more of them in the rooms and corridors, which seemed to her interminable. At last, however, the guide brought her to a lofty doorway hung with red silk. He drew aside the curtain, and she looked into a long, barely-furnished room. At the other end of it, on a low dais, sat a middle-aged Chinaman in a black robe, two secretaries squatting at his feet. It was the Grand Lama, the head of the Kwang-Chiu.

He dismissed the secretaries and sat regarding her with an impassive Oriental gaze. She approached him resolutely and made him a correct kow-tow. Her nerves quivered, but she bravely concealed her terror.

"Honorable sir," she began, "the object of my visit is to beg you will deign to examine this paper, which I have unworthily prepared for your eyes."

She handed him a scroll written in Chinese characters.

"You are aware," the Lama said coldly, "that you have gained access where none of your race and religion have ever been admitted?"

She bowed in acquiescence, and, while the slanting eyes before her glanced slowly down the perpendicular columns of the writing, her thoughts dwelt upon that one man of her country who had dared to venture within the power of the terrible Kwang-Chiu. That man was Horace Mannering, the Orientalist, the author of

"At the Head of the Yang-Tse-Kiang," and it was to avert from him certain and terrible vengeance that Priscilla Vandewater had penetrated into the stronghold of his enemies. Two years ago in New York she had caught the contagion of his enthusiasm and begun the study of Chinese, and after he left America on his last and most daring expedition, she continued her studies with a zeal which, perhaps, he had never suspected. She believed that it was this zeal, warmed by platonic friendship, which had induced her to act upon the warning of the head of the New York branch, who owed a debt of gratitude to Horace Mannering, and endeavor to save him from the clutches of the Order.

The Grand Lama read the proffered paper, at first carelessly, and then with evident alarm, but his yellow face soon regained its stolid indifference.

"These are a mass of lying scandals," he said scornfully. "If you are a spy, you have done your work badly. I do not care to talk with you."

The girl laughed. She had seen the start of terror, and it gave her courage. She dropped the formal Chinese phraseology. "Do you find it all there?" she asked. "The secret negotiations with Russia, the plot to divide Manchuria, — for which you were to receive ten million taels, were you not? — and the plan to destroy the English power in the East? Is it all correct?"

The Chinaman smiled. The hand that held the scroll trembled; but still he smiled — until his face bore a ghastly resemblance to a grinning mask at a fancy ball.

"Your knowledge matters little," he replied grimly. "It will die with you. And soon."

"Yes?" said she. Her friend in New York had instructed her how to behave, but she was finding it easier than she had expected to carry out his instructions. She felt no fear.

"At the American consulate there are two attested copies of this document," she explained sweetly, "and unless I return in two hours they will be delivered at the English and Japanese legations. Besides," she added, "look at this!"

She drew the yellow box from her pocket. It was her last card, and she played it boldly. The Chinaman snatched the box from her fingers, opened it eagerly, glared at the engraved stone

and back at the girl. Then he sat and considered, while Priscilla Vandewater stood quietly and watched his immovable saffron countenance. At last he spoke.

"What do you want?" said he.

Ten minutes later Miss Vandewater emerged from the gates of the monastery, and, reentering her rickshaw, was carried down the Street of the One Hundred Grandsons and up the Street of the Ascending Dragon to the foreign quarter. In spite of her success, she felt weak and giddy; she would have liked to go off by herself and cry, but it was not yet time for that. She had another duty to perform, which, in her morbid state of mind, seemed harder than what she had just gone through. She had given her word that Horace Mannering should leave China on the next steamer, and that the secrets of the Kwang-Chiu should be kept, and when the coolies reached the hotel, she wearily descended from her rickshaw, ordered a private parlor, and sent him her card.

"Tell him I must see him at once," she bade the servant, and while she waited she paced up and down the little room. She dreaded and yet longed to see how he would look, what he would say when she told him what she had done. Would he take it as a thing one man might do for another, or — and here her cheeks burned with shame — would he believe it was something different? And if he did, what would he think of her?

When Horace Mannering was ushered into the parlor, he was amazed to find not the calm and encouragingly kind Miss Vandewater of his acquaintance, but a strangely flushed and excited young woman, who appeared to shrink from him and hardly permitted him to greet her. She held out her hand stiffly.

"I sent for you, Mr. Mannering," she began, "to tell you you must leave China at once. At once!" she repeated feverishly, answering his look of amazement. "You must not lose a moment. You want to know why? Wait — I will tell you. I will tell you everything."

She put up her hand and brushed the hair from her forehead. It was burning. Now that he was actually in her presence, it seemed to her that what she had done was bold, unwomanly, inexcusable. She was glad that it was done, that he was safe;